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## "Quotes"

"The more I want to get something done, the less I call it work."

~Richard Bach

"There are so many people who are arguing or fighting over issues which don't have much relevance. We must all [realize] it is not worth it. It's like being in the whirlpools which are always present behind a little rock near a river. We seem to be living in these little whirlpools and forget that there is a whole river. The picture is much bigger."

~Kalpana Chawla

"I always try to work hard and get things done as soon as possible, but never at the loss of quality of the product."

~Chet Faker

"It's a bad day when you don't get the work done that you need to get done or you don't get it done to the satisfaction."

~David Fincher

"Just taking risks for risk's sake, that doesn't do it for me. I'm willing to take risks that I think are worth it, and I've worked so hard to make sure that I survive."

~Chris Hadfield

"I've worked hard all my life. You have to if you want to get things done."

~Doris Lessing

"Ego stops you from getting things done and getting people to work with you. That's why I firmly believe that ego and success are not compatible"

~Harvey Mackay



Dear Friend,

## Getting Stuff Done

When you get right down to it, *leadership* isn't complicated.

Okay, let me say that differently.

The concept of *leadership* isn't complicated. The execution of *leadership*...well, that's another story entirely.

Stick with me, though, and consider the concept.

At its core, leadership isn't about titles, or perks, or bossing folks around. At its core, leadership is about getting stuff done through (and, the best leaders would add, with) others. It's about achieving the work of your organization.

Here's the rub.

We can have the tendency, as leaders, to drive our teams to get stuff done. We push, and prod, and cajole...but, all of that activity might be in furtherance of stuff that leaves the team, and even onlookers, scratching their heads. "Why this?" "Why now?" "Why all the fuss?"

That's our topic for this month's **EA Insights**. Leaders, it's time to take stock. Is the juice *really* worth the squeeze? Those around you are asking...even if you're not.

So, keep reading. You might just realize a way to get more (meaningful) stuff done!

All the best,

*June*

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

## Leaders, Is the Juice Worth the Squeeze?

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

One important part of my role with organizations is taking the pulse. As an outsider, it's often easier for me to see, hear, and sense what's really going on -- that which is shared openly, as well as the undercurrent -- in ways that those in the midst of the madness often can't.

This week, for instance, I've had interactions with two very different organizations but, interestingly, two entities that are grappling with a very similar issue.

They're weary!

Many on these teams are working hard. (*Now, mind you, there also is a smattering of folks who are hardly working, but that's a topic for another day!*) Overall, people are scrambling. They're pushing to carry out the direction, meet the goals, get the stuff done that they've been assigned to do.

And, they're tired.

And, because they're tired, they're becoming ineffective.

And, because they're tired and becoming ineffective, they're growing disgruntled.

And, because they're tired and becoming ineffective and growing disgruntled, it's affecting the environment as well as the product/service output.

And, all of THAT is beginning to show up on the bottom line.

What's behind this occurrence? Believe it or not, it just might stem from a strength found in these (and other) organizations' leaders -- the gift of innovation and ideas!



Leaders -- the people at the helm -- are trained, charged, or simply prone to come up with good ones. "Let's do...!" And, that is a necessary and, quite frankly, expected part of the leadership role. The challenge comes when that leader does not stop to count the cost associated with implementation of his or her newest "Why don't we...?" notion. When every design must be acted upon, or even when excellent thoughts are pursued without fully mapping out impact on the organization -- budget, skillsets, existing (and perhaps conflicting) initiatives, staff capacity, etc. --, then it's prime time for a hit...to the team, to the tone, and ultimately to the till.

So, what's a leader to do? Do you stop trying things that are new? Of course not!

It is important, however, to ask yourself (honestly) in the words of a wise friend of mine: "Is the juice worth the squeeze?" Let's briefly consider three aspects of that question that are essential for leaders to pose to themselves before moving forward.

### **Am I honestly assessing whether the juice is worth the squeeze?**

Again, we all get those "wake you up in the middle of the night" brilliant ideas. Trust me; I know! The question is whether you allow the excitement of what could be to overshadow the reality of what is. As a leader, it's essential to do continual gut checks, and also to surround yourself with people who are empowered to pull your coattail and speak a word of wisdom, each time your creative justices start to flow.

The intention is not to put a chill on innovation or new ideas. Instead, any time the bug bites, the recommendation is think twice, to lean on the trusted counsel of those around you, and to solicit and seriously consider the input of those who are closest to, and most affected by, the matter at hand.

By all means, keep dreaming! When you awaken, though, be willing to slice and dice and poke holes to ensure that your dream can withstand the light of day!

### **Am I articulating to those around me why the juice is worth the squeeze?**

The challenge may not be with the dream. It may be that, leader, you've not adequately voiced to others why the extra work or change in tactic -- the squeeze -- is worth it.

Too many leaders think that their role starts and stops with telling people *what* to do. NOT!

A critical part of the leader's job involves helping others to see *why* the adjustment or the new thing is necessary. To get stuff done, it is incumbent upon the leader to paint the "why" picture not just once, but continually. Explain why this new idea supports the overall mission, why it is essential to what the group is trying to accomplish this year, why this timing is critical, why the work plan of the team or the individual contributions of the person make sense.

If you are not constantly articulating why this particular, hard-fought juice is worth the squeeze, people will lose heart or focus or enthusiasm or steam. That jeopardizes the outcome and likely finds you squeezing ... hard, but yielding little juice.

### **Am I measuring whether the juice was worth the squeeze?**

So, you squeezed. But, when all's said and done, what came from it? Was there any juice? If juice did flow, was it comparable to the level of squeezing that occurred? In other words, was it all worth it?

That is the final question. Are you measuring -- both along the way, and certainly in retrospect-- the costs against the benefits?

Sometimes leaders shy away from assessment. After all, it's tough to confess that that great idea maybe wasn't so great after all. It's not fun to share that the notion may have been top-notch, but the implementation left something to be desired. The thing is, whether you admit it or not, others see it, have lived through it, and may be less willing to go through it with you again if they can help it.

Leadership effectiveness is shown, however, when you are willing to take a long, hard look both at the big picture and at the details...before launch, at key milestone points, and at what is supposed to be the end. Even more, leadership effectiveness is shown when you're willing to pull the plug, push pause, or do a major revision if all is not in order. Driving on, when it is clear that the juice is *not* worth the squeeze, is a surefire way not only to have an unproductive outcome but to lose people's confidence and/or their partnership with you as well.

So, leader, what's that big thing on your plate today? Have you taken the time to consider if the juice really is worth the squeeze? That question...and, more importantly, its answer...may be standing between you and your team and, perhaps, between you all and success.

Again, sometimes leaders are too close to the situation to see clearly. However, help is near. Call **Executive Advantage**. Let us partner with you to take the pulse of your organization and to be a sounding board for you as you grapple with hard leadership questions. **Contact us today.**



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*"The tighter you squeeze, the less you have."*

~Thomas Merton

*"People will accomplish anything if they believe the goal is worth it -- they are worth it and that they are capable of achieving it [.]"*

~Jillian Michaels

*"Faced with a time shortage, we squeeze tasks into the nooks and crannies of our calendar, leaving less and less time to switch between them. As a result, we become less and less productive exactly when we need to be most productive."*

~Sendhil Mullainathan

*"Regardless of whatever job you do, you want to see the importance of it or how it can be important. I think by inspiring the people that I come from -- if I inspire anyone -- would be worth it."*

~Michael Pena

*"I have to be realistic about what I can and can't do. So whatever I do has to really be worth it. I like to master the things I do."*

~Queen Latifah

*"When you have to work with and exist amongst cynical, burned-out personnel..., it doesn't matter what you're [doing] or how much you're being paid -- it's not worth it."*

~Henry Rollins

*"I always encourage employees to feel free to raise any issues that prevent them from getting good work done."*

~Gwynne Shotwell

*"A leader's job is not to do the work for others, it's to help others figure out how to do it themselves, to get things done, and to succeed beyond what they thought possible."*

~Simon Sinek

*"Work smart. Get things done."*

~Susan Wojcicki

## About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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